

BOOK REVIEWS

Ball, Bryan W. *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*. Studies in the History of Christian Thought, vol. 12. Leiden: Brill, 1975. xiv + 281 pp. Gld. 62.

This publication represents a revision of material that was originally presented in the author's doctoral dissertation at the University of London in 1970. During the intervening years Ball has been doing extensive research in broader areas of theological thought of the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the British Isles and has thus enriched his background knowledge for the particular line of theological concern which is the focus of the present book.

In six main chapters, the work here under review treats the following major areas or aspects of eschatological thought of 17th-century England up to 1660: (1) "The Word of God and the Second Coming of Christ" (pp. 15-54; incidentally, "World" should be "Word" in the table of contents on p. vii); (2) "Apocalyptic Interpretation and the End of the Age" (pp. 55-88); (3) "Signs of the Times and the Time of the End" (pp. 89-125); (4) "The Kingdoms of the World and the Kingdom of God" (pp. 126-156); (5) "Last Events and the Millennial Rule of Jesus" (pp. 157-192); and (6) "The End of Faith and the Godly Life" (pp. 193-227). Ball's discussion provides a truly comprehensive survey of important writers treating eschatology during that period in the British Isles, and among his significant and perhaps somewhat astounding conclusions are that eschatological hope was indeed widespread and that a surprisingly large amount of common ground existed regarding the basic doctrine of Christ's imminent second advent (even though there was more divergence with respect to millenarianism.)

In his "Conclusion" (pp. 228-238) Ball observes that the breadth of eschatological involvement was evident in various ways: (1) ecclesiastically, with representatives from among Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, and Anabaptists; (2) socially, with representation by "works of scores of clergy from virtually every rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy . . . complemented by the writings of laymen from a wide cross-section of public and private life" (p. 231); and (3) geographically, with London and southern counties figuring prominently, but with various other areas in England and with Scotland well represented too. Ball's "corollary" conclusion that "eschatological expectation belonged more to orthodoxy than it did to heterodoxy" (p. 233) seems valid. So also does his acceptance (ibid.) of Lamont's observation in *Godly Rule* that the book of Revelation has too frequently been identified only with fanatical groups such as the Fifth Monarchists.

Concerning the nature of *A Great Expectation*, Ball himself considers this book to be more in the line of historical theology than theological history; and in a preface, the eminent British historian Geoffrey F. Nuttall has observed in this regard, "Whichever it is, he [Ball] is insatiably inquisitive and asks many questions of both history and theology. He has read widely

in seventeenth-century writers and has taken the trouble to study how these men thought. He also possesses a qualification essential but all too rare in that he is at home in the biblical material and understands the premisses from which argument proceeded" (p. x). With this evaluation by Nuttall, the reviewer would heartily concur; but he would also point out that in various chapters there seems to be a certain lack of synthesis of the materials (either historically or theologically) into a genuine frame of "historical theology" or "theological history." These chapters have impressed this reviewer as being more in the nature of a catalog of viewpoints than they are a cohesive or constructive account of why things happened as they did (or why they were as they were), even though frequent and judicious comparisons and contrasts between writers are made.

Perhaps it would have been impossible for the author to do otherwise in any meaningful way in those various chapters. In any event, there certainly is a place for "compilatory" types of material as well as for thorough-going syntheses. The "Conclusion" is particularly valuable and helpful in bringing together the various strands and strains of material into a somewhat cohesive whole. The reader can read and reread it with great profit.

It must also be stated that this book indeed makes an outstanding contribution to the secondary literature on theological thought in Great Britain during the period under consideration. For all Christians of our day who emphasize an eschatological hope—whether they be scholars or laymen—, this publication will provide fascinating reading. Scholarly though it is in nature—with adequate footnote references—, the text is nonetheless written in a most readable style.

The volume closes with two appendices on "The Apocalyptic Significance of the Song of Solomon" and "The Resurrection of the Body" (pp. 239-242 and 243-246), an extensive bibliography (pp. 247-263), and indexes to biblical references (pp. 265-267), names (pp. 268-272), and subjects (pp. 273-281).

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Baum, Gregory. *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology*. New York and Toronto: Paulist, 1975. 296 pp. \$6.95.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, Catholic bishops initiated a vigorous program to implement the reforms voted at the Council. Many of the difficulties they encountered were blamed on the secularizing influence of sociologists and worldly philosophers who based human salvation on "value-free" analysis, social planning, and scorn for the supernatural.

In 1969 Gregory Baum tried a new approach. The Canadian theologian took a leave from the University of Toronto to study sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York. He too was troubled about reform. "I was interested in sociology," he writes in his introduction, "largely because I could not understand why the Catholic Church, despite the good will of clergy and laity and the extraordinary institutional event of Vatican II, had been unable to move and adopt the new style of Catholicism outlined in the conciliar documents." He hoped that sociology, by exploring both the intended and the unintended consequences of religious positions, would be able to answer the question.